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Thurmond is seeking investigation of leaks in the case of Sporkin

By Christopher Simpson
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The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee has asked the FBI to investigate what he said was a leak of classified information that appeared in a story in The Washington Times about the nomination of Stanley Sporkin to the U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, a committee spokesman said yesterday.

Mark Goodin, spokesman for committee chairman Sen. Strom Thurmond, South Carolina Republican, confirmed that Mr. Thurmond wrote to FBI Director William Webster on Sept. 24 requesting an investigation into the source of the published information. He said this information involved national security.

The story detailed the committee's expected closed hearings into the nomination of Mr. Sporkin, who is general counsel to the CIA. The story included a lengthy account of classified information that federal authorities were said to have intercepted enroute to the Middle East.

"The chief reason for the request is that this is a disclosure of information involving national security and that is a very serious offense," Mr. Goodin said.

"We have no indication where the leak came from. This is just an attempt to ensure that the FBI investigates the leak, finds where it occurred and punishes the individual responsible."

Mr. Goodin said the FBI has not responded to the request for an investigation. An FBI spokesman said the bureau will respond only to Mr. Thurmond and he could not comment further.

The story detailed allegations that Mr. Sporkin acted improperly during a federal

investigation into a senior CIA official suspected of leaking classified information. The story told how Mr. Sporkin was slated to be questioned by Judiciary Committee members behind closed doors regarding his involvement with former CIA National Intelligence Officer Charles E. Waterman.

The focus of the questioning was whether Mr. Sporkin shielded Mr. Waterman from federal investigators who were investigating allegations that Mr. Waterman had disclosed CIA secrets. The story also described information the National Security Agency intercepted in June of 1982 as it was sent from Washington to a large Asian corporation.

The story said this included classified data on the Iran-Iraq military confrontation, plans by the United States to halt purchases of Libyan oil and internal Iraqi political developments. In addition, the story included accounts of Mr. Waterman's alleged involvement in passing the documents, along with details of the FBI investigation and the CIA's role in allegedly protecting Mr. Waterman from being prosecuted on espionage charges.

Mr. Goodin said the committee's chief investigator had access to top secret information, some of which appeared in the news story, for nearly a year before any leaks occurred. He speculated that the disclosures to The Times may have come from committee staff members after the information was circulated beyond the investigator, but that was a question for the FBI to determine.

"There were facts in that story that obviously originated from a review of information involving the Sporkin matter," Mr. Goodin said of the information that could have been leaked from a number of sources outside the committee. "But it had to be someone with access who made the unauthorized disclosure."